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ARTICLE APPEARED ON PAGE 4-A

NAPLES DAILY NEWS (FL)
6 May 1986

Ex-CIA Man Shares Anecdotes

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The Central Intelligence Agency deals in serious business, but former CIA officer David Atlee Phillips had the crowd laughing with his anecdotes about his years with the agency.

Phillips, the former chief of the CIA's Latin American and Caribbean operations, was one of the speakers at Monday's National Intelligence Symposium in Naples.

IN HIS YEARS with the CIA, Phillips has seen the attitudes of America's youth swing 180 degrees.

"In 1976-77, appearing on a college campus was more rough than any other assignment you could get," Phillips said.

He told of being met by hundreds of protesters in a speech in Wisconsin in 1977 and harassed throughout his talk.

But last week on a California campus, Phillips was applauded when he turned the tables on another speaker who introduced himself as the man in the white hat and Phillips as the man in the black hat.

"There's been an incredible change on our college campuses," he said.

Phillips also told a tale of how a Russian agent unknowingly tried to recruit him as a Russian spy. The two were seated next to each other on a plane and Phillips invoked the CIA "dirty tricks" and lied about being a CIA agent.

PHILLIPS SAID the man gave him a business card. When, Phillips revealed his true identity, the man wanted his card back. He didn't get it, Phillips said.

Although Phillips had many stories to tell, the life of the CIA agent is not always filled with the thrilling adventures found in spy novels. He said the symbol of the CIA should be a typewriter and 3-by-5 cards.

It is those cards, with little bits of collected information, that sometimes make the difference in cases.

"Of course intelligence can make a difference," Phillips stressed. He noted several instances where terrorists were captured because of minute pieces of information gathered by the CIA.

CIA intelligence work resulted in the release of a former Dominican Republican female diplomat who had been kidnapped by terrorists. The terrorists wanted $1 million in cash, the release of political prisoners and a flight to Cuba for her release. They ended up surrendering.

USING WHAT Phillips called dirty tricks, the CIA bugged the provisions sent to the terrorists and manipulated a radio station that the terrorists were listening to so that all the terrorists heard were their fellow comrades deriding them for kidnapping a woman.

Machismo won out over political ideals and the terrorists surrendered.

Also using intelligence reports, the CIA was able to prevent the kidnapping of officials visiting a Latin American country for an international conference. The terrorists had planned to use that country as a base for an attack on another country. Both plans were foiled, Phillips said.

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